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EDITORIAL

Optometry Research Agenda for the Next Decade: 20/20 by 2030

Agenda de Investigación en Optometría para la Próxima Década: 20/20 para 2030

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The beginning of a new period is a good opportunity to think about the achievements of the immediate past period and compound a ''wish list'' for the following one. As the second decade of the XXI century finishes, a new decade of challenges and opportunities opens in front of us. Certainly the ultimate goal will be to provide better vision care to everyone. However, past experience suggests that such expectations provide good ''sound bites'' but are rarely met. As an example, in the late 1990's the ophthalmic community trusted on the possibility to provide 20/10 vision by 2010 trusting on advanced refractive surgical procedures. More realistic goals were later set by the World Health Organization to provide 20/20 vision by 2020. Again, this wasn't a realistic goal for many in risk of severe visual impairment but also for many healthy eyes that might become severely impaired over the next decade, even considering those affected by avoidable severe visual loss.[1]

It is important to start defining realistic expectations for the next 10 years of research and innovation in our field. Among them, the development of research to define the basis of the mechanisms associated to myopia onset and myopia control or vision therapy is critical as well as the improvement and optimization of the optical options for presbyopia compensation.[2] Further developments in diagnosis and monitoring procedures supported by information and communication technologies will also flourish and consolidate over the next decade opening new opportunities for widespread of diagnostic tools, personalized treatment and continuous monitoring.[3,4] But this will be only possible if research activity is carefully conducted and scrutinized,[5,6] and at the same time we are able to develop effective ways to vanish pseudoscience and scientific fraud not only from social media but from the ''scientific literature''.[7]

Europe will start soon a new program of investment in R&D funded by the European Union, expected to reach nearly 100,000 million euro for the next 7-year framework. Other organizations around the world will also start new funding schemes or continue with the present ones. Altogether, this is an opportunity to see research results in optometry and vision science to flourish everywhere contributing to the advance of science, technology and innovation at the service of the visual eyecare. Biotechnology, nanotechnology and further exciting discoveries in fundamental and applied sciences will push the limits providing new tools and pathways for better understanding of the visual system, its improvement and reparation. Considering the Open Access policy of these funding schemes and the increasing audience of Journal of Optometry, it is reasonable to expect that many scientific publications derived from public and private funding initiatives will see J Optom as an optimal platform to share with the public the new discoveries.

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But even trusting that we will find solutions for these and other challenges, their implementation for the good of the community requires efficient strategies to reach the population. Otherwise, as someone said ''a target without a plan is just a wish''. Therefore, it is important that along with scientific and clinical advancements efforts should be focused on the integration of optometrists autonomously working in close proximity with the community but also integrated with other vision care specialists in well organized and highly effective multidisciplinary teams able to bring universal eyecare to everyone beyond particular, corporate or professional self-interests.[8]

Our hope and actions should be directed to make possible that more people affected by avoidable causes of visual loss keep their vision as close as possible to 20/20 by 2030 instead of ending the decade with more and more people down to 20/30 or even worse. This has to be our ethical compromise with the community we serve.

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